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General Assembly

Fifty-second Session

Official Records

25th plenary meeting
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New York

President: Mr. Udovenko . . . . . (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 120 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/52/350/Add.2)

The President: I should like to draw the General Assembly's attention to document A/52/350/Add.2. In a letter contained in that document, the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communications dated 16 and 29 September 1997, Chad has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter. May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

Address by Mr. Glafcos Clerides, President of the Republic of Cyprus

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Cyprus.

Mr. Glafcos Clerides, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Cyprus, His Excellency Mr. Glafcos Clerides, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Clerides: I would like to begin by extending to you, Sir, my warmest congratulations on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. We are certain that your long experience and diplomatic skills will guide us successfully in our work at this session of the General Assembly.

I would also like to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, for the determined leadership with which he steered our work at the fifty-first session.

Our Organization, with its universal membership, comprehensive mandate and broad spectrum of activities, is the only global forum able to pursue and achieve the universal goals we all strive for: a secure and peaceful future, a narrowing of the gap between rich and poor, full respect for human rights, free and equitable trade, the protection of the environment and the promotion of sustainable development.

I am pleased once again to be able to take this opportunity to renew our commitment to the ideals and aims that all of us here share.

This year is a landmark in the reform process of the United Nations because of the active measures taken by the Secretary-General of our Organization to tackle long-standing and deep-rooted issues. Last July, the Secretary-General presented to us a comprehensive package of reforms designed to help the Organization rationalize and streamline its operations, secure its financial position and

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refocus itself to meet the changes in the global order, thus allowing the United Nations to fully utilize the strengths and expertise it already possesses.

We are therefore particularly pleased to welcome these proposals by the Secretary-General. We hope that, by the conclusion of the debate on this issue that will take place in the plenary during this session, we shall reach a consensus, thus creating the necessary momentum for their speedy implementation, and produce concrete results before we reach the new millennium.

The reforms are being introduced at a time when it is generally acknowledged that the High-Level Working Groups mandated by the General Assembly to examine specific issues, from the restructuring and strengthening of the main United Nations organs to ensuring a firmer and lasting financing for our Organization, have yet to achieve substantial progress.

From this rostrum, I have stated before that we subscribe to the need to reform the Security Council by making it representative of the increase in the membership of the United Nations and reflect the changes in the post-cold-war world. We consider the need to reform the Security Council a top priority, for it directly affects its capacity to discharge its cardinal responsibility — that of maintaining international peace and security.

In this regard, we welcome the progress already achieved in the working methods of the Security Council and expect further steps towards transparency and democratization. A number of proposals have been put forward by Member States over the last three years. Further deliberations are required, however, to achieve an agreement that would command the general support of the membership of the Organization.

An important step this year concerns the work of the Organization in the field of international economic and social cooperation. After three years of hard deliberation, the General Assembly adopted its Agenda for Development last June. This is a great step forward because, as the Secretary-General himself states in his report on the work of the Organization, it addresses not only the conventional development issues but also stresses the mutually supportive though complex relationships among development, peace, democracy, good governance and human rights.

Equally important was the convening of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly to review the implementation of Agenda 21 — the global plan of action for sustainable development — which was adopted five years ago at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro.

I believe that an important part of the future work of this Organization will lie in following up the work done at the major conferences and in reviewing the implementation of the plans and programmes they adopted.

The United Nations of the future must give most urgent priority to the Agenda for Development. Any modern concept of international peace must recognize that peace, security and development are indivisible.

It is indisputable that one of the major strengths of the United Nations is its universality. It is at once global, regional and locally based. It has achieved great results in the fields of international interaction. Its activities have a tremendous effect on our everyday lives.

At this juncture, I should commend and stress the important role of the Organization in the promotion of full respect for and universal application of human rights, as well as for the progressive development and codification of international law. In this respect, we fully support the establishment of the international criminal court, which we have long advocated, and welcome the progress made in the Preparatory Committee and the increased momentum towards its fruition.

Though local and ethnic conflicts still persist, seriously affecting the maintenance of international peace and security, the role of the Organization in disarmament for the past twelve months has been marked by great steps. A number of significant conventions have already been concluded or have entered into force. In welcoming these achievements we feel we must continue to move ahead for their full and effective implementation.

We must also cherish the Organization's contribution to development and education, its work against hunger and illiteracy and, in short, its role in restoring and upholding human dignity.

We believe in the United Nations and in the Charter, not as an abstract ideal, but as a functioning, indispensable, concrete entity. The principles and ideals of the United Nations have formed the cornerstone of our foreign policy since our independence and membership in the United Nations. We are fully committed to

strengthening the Organization by helping it tackle its precarious financial position, streamline and rationalize its operations and exploit to the full its uniqueness and its unrivalled expertise. We are confident that the Organization will be able to harness the forces of change in ways that will benefit us all.

This year the United Nations has been especially active on certain long-outstanding issues such as East Timor, Western Sahara, the situation in the Middle East and Cyprus.

We welcome the developments on the question of Western Sahara and the agreement reached on the implementation of the settlement plan under the auspices of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy. We hope that these positive achievements will move the peace process forward and bring a final settlement to this long drawn-out situation of tension and conflict.

Despite our earlier hopes based on the peace agreement, the current events in the Middle East and the worsening situation in the occupied territories are cause for great concern. As a neighbouring country, we wish to reiterate our support for the efforts to achieve peace in the area on the basis of the agreements reached and of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

As to the question of Cyprus, 1997 has been a year of intense diplomatic activity, culminating in face-to-face intercommunal talks under the auspices of the United Nations last July and August in Troutbeck and Glion, respectively. The resumption of the talks was the result of the untiring efforts of the Secretary-General, encouraged and actively supported by the international community. The Security Council closely pursued the developments on the question of Cyprus, and nine individual countries appointed special representatives on Cyprus. The European Union, through the Special Representative of the Presidency, was also following developments closely.

When invited by Mr. Kofi Annan last June to attend face-to-face talks with the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community in Troutbeck and later in Glion, we responded positively and demonstrated our sincere and unwavering commitment to the peace process as the only means of solving the Cyprus question, and our will to work for a comprehensive, just and viable solution.

Our will was tested even harder when, on the eve of the talks, Turkey and the so-called Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which is not recognized internationally except by Turkey, signed an illegal agreement purporting to lead to the annexation by Turkey of the areas occupied by the Turkish forces if the European Union proceeded to accession negotiations with Cyprus. Despite this enormous provocation, we reacted in a low key in order to avoid tension which would affect adversely the climate of the talks.

During the talks we worked hard and cooperated constructively with Mr. Cordovez, the Secretary-General's Special Adviser, with the sole aim of breaking the impasse and moving forward to reverse the status quo created and maintained by Turkey since 1974 by the use of force and declared unacceptable by numerous Security Council resolutions.

In contrast, the response of the other side was completely negative. Despite our constructive attitude, despite the efforts of Mr. Cordovez and those of other interested countries through their representatives, Mr. Denktaş refused to hold any discussions on the substance of the Cyprus problem unless the European Union froze its plans for accession talks with the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, which were in accordance with the European decision of 6 March 1995. Mr. Denktaş even threatened that if the European Union decided to proceed with Cyprus' application he would not negotiate at all in the future. It was therefore abundantly clear that the other side did not go to the talks with the aim of finding a solution to the problem, but in an attempt to impede Cyprus' European Union accession process.

Any doubts as to the real cause of the failure of the talks to produce results on the substantive aspects of the Cyprus problem were dissolved by the unanimous verdict of the international community, pronounced last 20 August by the President of the Security Council in a statement to the press after the briefing by Mr. Cordovez on the outcome of the talks in Glion. In the statement, our positive attitude and cooperation was commended, whereas the Turkish Cypriot side was blamed for impeding substantive progress by the attempt to bring in preconditions to the table. The same verdict was reached by the European Union, which also rejected any link between the talks and the start of the European Union's accession negotiations with Cyprus.

It is with great regret that once again in addressing the General Assembly I have to report that no progress has been made towards the solution of the Cyprus problem due to the inflexibility of the Turkish side.

The result of this deliberate inflexibility is the perpetuation of the illegal Turkish occupation of 37 per cent of the territory of the Republic by Turkish military forces, the artificial forceful separation of the two communities, the colonization of the occupied area by illegal settlers from Turkey, the refugee problem, the usurpation of the Greek Cypriot properties in the occupied area and the continued blunt violation by the Turkish side of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

I fully share the disappointment of the Security Council at the absence of progress during the Glion talks, despite the interest shown by the international community, and more particularly by those countries that had their representatives in the wings observing the talks. The clear conclusion to be drawn, however, is that more active involvement of the international community, and in particular of those who are in the wings of the talks, is needed if the talks are to produce results.

After the end of the talks, Mr. Denktash and Ankara continued to maintain the same negative attitude. There was a barrage of threatening statements against Cyprus, in direct violation of international law, and in particular of the United Nations resolutions on Cyprus, which, *inter alia*, call for the respect of the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and unity of the Republic of Cyprus and the withdrawal of all foreign troops.

The Turkish side continues to threaten to annex to Turkey the territory of the Republic occupied by Turkish forces if the European Union commences accession negotiations with Cyprus, and to use force against the Republic of Cyprus to prevent the implementation of the agreement to buy and instal in Cyprus the S-300 defensive ground-to-air missile system.

Last year we pledged before this body our commitment to do everything in our power to help the Secretary-General of our Organization succeed in his renewed efforts in the search for a lasting solution to the Cyprus problem. I believe that we have honoured our pledge to the full. I wish to reiterate our commitment to continue our constructive attitude, despite our disappointment.

However, I wish to make it abundantly clear that we cannot and we will not relinquish our inalienable right to defend our country and to decide about our armaments. As long as the Turkish threat emanating from the continued aggression and occupation of 37 per cent of the territory of the Republic exists, we have not only the right but also the duty to provide for the security of the people of Cyprus. We will not tie our hands behind our backs and allow the Turkish air force to bomb our towns and villages at will — as it has done in the past — without the ability to defend ourselves. If it is again necessary for our forces to take the battlefield, never again will they do so without adequate protection from air attacks by the Turkish air force.

During the talks in Glion, in an attempt to assist the peace process, I proposed to Mr. Denktash that both leaders should make a declaration denouncing the use of force as a means of solving the Cyprus problem and should agree to work for a specific programme of reduction of military forces and equipment and a programme for demilitarizing the island and limiting the importation of arms.

I believe that my proposal, if accepted by the other side, may open the way for substantive progress towards a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus question and the restoration of respect for the human rights of the people of Cyprus, which have been grossly violated for the last 23 years.

To my Turkish Cypriot compatriots I wish to say this: Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots will live in Cyprus for centuries to come. We must live as friends and as citizens of a bi-communal, bi-zonal federal Republic, respecting each other's ethnic origins, traditions, culture and religion and the equal political status of our respective communities. We must also be citizens of the European Union. This will give us greater security and prosperity, both for our respective communities and for Cyprus, our country.

The question of Cyprus has been on the agenda of the United Nations for too long. A momentum has been created for the solution of the Cyprus problem as a result of the renewed efforts of the United Nations, strongly supported by the international community. Let us not miss this opportunity. It is clear by now where the attention of the Security Council and the international community should be focused. It should use all the means in its power to persuade the Turkish side to abandon its intransigent position.

Let me assure this body once again that my Government will continue to work with the Secretary-General in his efforts to find a solution based on a State of Cyprus with a single sovereignty and international personality and a single citizenship, with its independence

and territorial integrity safeguarded and comprising two politically equal communities, as described in the relevant Security Council resolutions, in a bi-communal and bi-zonal federation, and that such settlement must exclude union, in whole or in part, with any other country or any form of partition or secession.

At this point I wish to express the gratitude of the Government and the people of Cyprus to all those countries that have been assisting and supporting the Secretary-General's efforts.

Before I conclude allow me to refer to a matter which is of great importance to my Government. This is the issue of missing persons in Cyprus.

My Government considers this issue a purely humanitarian one whose solution is long overdue. All efforts should be made so that the legitimate rights of the families to be informed in a convincing and conclusive manner about the fate of their loved ones are fully respected by all concerned. This also includes the right to a decent burial for the missing persons who are proved to be dead.

In this spirit, I recently had two meetings in Cyprus with the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community, Mr. Rauf Denktash. Certain steps were agreed in the presence of the resident Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General that we believe will contribute towards the desired progress in the efforts to solve this humanitarian problem.

The hopes and expectations of all — especially the relatives of the missing persons — centre on the implementation of what was agreed in a true spirit of humanitarian principles and practice.

However, the agreement I reached with the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mr. Denktash, will prove of little use if the third member of the Committee on Missing Persons is not appointed. It also is my earnest view that the work of the Committee on Missing Persons will be greatly assisted and expedited if experienced investigators are appointed to assist it in its task.

In conclusion, may I reassure the Assembly — and indeed the world community — of my country's dedication to the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, as well as emphasize our determination to spare no effort in working, in concert with other nations, for the prevalence of justice, peace, progress and stability in the volatile region that is our part of the world.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Cyprus for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Glafcos Clerides, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: I call first on the Minister for Foreign and Political Affairs of the Republic of San Marino, His Excellency Mr. Gabriele Gatti.

Mr. Gatti (San Marino) *(spoke in Italian; English text furnished by the delegation):* It is my honour to congratulate you, Sir, on your election and to assure you of the fullest cooperation of the delegation of San Marino. May I thank the outgoing President, His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail, for his excellent work, and reiterate to the Secretary-General the best wishes of the Government and the people of San Marino for a successful fulfilment of his mandate. The goals that the United Nations is called upon to achieve are important and demanding, but also stimulating.

These are times of great expectations for the United Nations, and the Republic of San Marino is determined to do everything within its power to help translate these expectations into concrete and effective actions. We must recognize that the United Nations has constantly inspired, promoted and instilled a greater respect for human rights. It has been building a new law of nations.

The United Nations has made it clear that peace cannot be achieved and maintained unless serious imbalances are redressed and all human beings, by virtue of their fundamental right to dignity, are respected and not discriminated against because of their diversity. Equally essential are access to progress and development for all; the equitable utilization of our planet's resources; and the avoidance of mere exploitation and abuse, which would jeopardize our future beyond repair.

Although in recent decades conflicts no longer break out on a worldwide scale and in some cases take place within national boundaries, they nonetheless continue to

claim innocent victims, cause incalculable damage and undermine economies, especially those of the less developed countries. Indeed, the instruments of war have changed. They have become increasingly sophisticated and destructive and more easily produced and spread. Just think of anti-personnel landmines; it has been estimated that millions of them have been placed throughout the world and that for each cleared mine, 50 new ones are laid.

In this connection, I stress the urgent need for all States to accede to the recently drafted Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

As regards the fight against terrorism, San Marino is following with great attention the work of the Ad Hoc Committee charged with drafting an International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings. The proliferation of violence and crime, which have become transnational, demands an adequate response by the international community.

With reference to drug trafficking, San Marino is particularly active in the field of prevention. This year, our Government launched the "Youth Project", which consists of a series of initiatives organized by, and dedicated to, young people, with the purpose of stimulating them to exploit their creativity and potential in a constructive way. In this regard, San Marino supports the Secretary-General's proposal to convene a special session of the General Assembly in June 1998 on the traffic in illicit narcotic drugs.

San Marino acknowledges that the Rio Conference indeed constituted a milestone in the history of our planet and revealed the magnitude of environmental degradation on Earth. Yet San Marino has observed with bitterness that concrete initiatives have fallen short of expectations. This was confirmed by the recent special session of the General Assembly on the review of Agenda 21.

Worthy of praise is the Secretary-General's proposal to revitalize the Trusteeship Council by entrusting it with a mandate of collective environmental safeguard. The environment is a priority concern for the Republic of San Marino. At the local level, a project is being undertaken for the monitoring of the territory which involves students of various school grades under the coordination and supervision of teachers. This project aims to enhance our citizens' awareness of the fact that environmental protection is the responsibility of each and every individual.

In the field of the prevention and suppression of child abuse, San Marino signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child and believes that the adoption of decisions aimed at defending children against any form of aggression, including sexual abuse, is of paramount importance.

San Marino continues to support the fight against capital punishment, in keeping with the fact that it was the first European country to abolish it in the mid-nineteenth century, and it urges other Member States to adopt concrete measures to eliminate the use of the death penalty.

And we must not forget the exodus of the many refugees who are fleeing their countries because of war, hunger or in the pursuit of the better future to which they are entitled.

San Marino, which boasts a tradition of great hospitality towards refuge-seekers, is deeply concerned about the situation observed in refugee camps and their impact on local populations. We are grateful to the High Commissioner for Refugees, who daily fulfils this demanding task with efficiency.

The United Nations is adjusting to the process of change by establishing the conditions for a concrete response. Its structure, organization and functioning must be on exactly the same wavelength as the new reality, and must be strong enough to face the challenges of the present — and those, even more demanding, of the coming third millennium. For this reason we appreciate the work already done by the Secretary-General and urge him to continue this essential process of renewal of the Organization.

The United Nations reform package proposed by the Secretary-General is a good basis for a realistic and effective response with a view to reaching the lofty goals of the Organization: peace, social and economic progress, and safeguard of the rights of both individuals and peoples. Member States will be able to focus better on these goals by solving, first of all, the United Nations financial crisis. To do this, a new and more equitable scale of assessments is necessary, along with cost-cutting, the elimination or reduction of bodies and services where appropriate, and, most important, the avoidance of overlap with other organizations, including at the regional level. Small countries are particularly aware of this issue, since it is increasingly difficult for them to guarantee

their participation and contribution — and not only in financial terms.

San Marino has given great attention to all proposals for the reform of the Security Council put forward by numerous countries during the debate. All of them are equally important and constitute an essential basis for the formulation of well-considered, comprehensive solutions. However, it is essential that participation in the conception and implementation of this restructuring not be confined to larger States. The future configuration of the United Nations should reflect a community of 185 countries, each and every one of them independent and sovereign according to the principles of universality and equality. Those are among the reasons that have led San Marino to support an increase in the number of non-permanent seats on the Security Council — though, and I stress this point once more, this is not the only issue.

The reform of the United Nations does not consist of being present in major or minor bodies, but rather of shaping the future together through the understanding, participation, awareness, involvement and support of all. We shall shape a future where universal peace is guaranteed and safeguarded by the United Nations.

San Marino is convinced that the United Nations must fulfil both a monitoring and a protecting mandate, on the one hand in favour of individuals whose rights and freedoms are limited or denied by their own States, and on the other in favour of those countries, especially smaller ones, whose development could be hampered or influenced.

In this regard I wish to underline how all countries and the United Nations itself could benefit from the role played by small States, which can make a significant contribution to major issues as well, since they have no military, political or economic interests but rather a heritage of ideals, culture and traditions to safeguard.

May these objectives be fully attained as the United Nations approaches the third millennium.

The President: I call next on His Excellency Mr. Eldar Kouliev, Chairman of the Delegation of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Kouliev (Azerbaijan) (*interpretation from Russian*): Allow me first of all, Sir, to congratulate you sincerely on your unanimous election to the post of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, and to express our confidence that under your wise and able guidance this session will successfully cope with all its historic tasks. Your election to that high and responsible post is further evidence of the burgeoning image of independent Ukraine, with which Azerbaijan enjoys an especially friendly relationship, and of its substantial contribution to the work of the Organization.

I would also like to address special appreciation to Mr. Razali Ismail, whose innovative approach and high professionalism to a large extent facilitated the success of the last session and showed the irreversible nature of the radical process of reforming the Organization with a view to strengthening its effectiveness.

For the past six years, the Republic of Armenia has continued its aggression against my country. Aiming to tear away and seize part of the territory of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Armenia initiated and sponsored a separatist movement in the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. Here it was gambling with the high principle of the self-determination of peoples and completely ignoring the principles of territorial integrity and the inviolability of borders. Subsequently, as members know, the Republic of Armenia resorted to armed aggression against the Azerbaijani Republic, occupying a considerable part of Azerbaijan and leaving about a million people without shelter.

Their later invention, the so-called Republic of Nagorny Karabakh, is nothing but a tactical trick in the strategy of Armenian politicians, which is to attach the Nagorny Karabakh region of the Azerbaijani Republic to the Republic of Armenia. The international community rejected this policy through Security Council resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993), which reaffirmed that the Nagorny Karabakh region is a part of Azerbaijan.

The 1996 Lisbon summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) put forward three principles for the settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. These were: the territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia and of the Azerbaijani Republic; definition of the legal status of Nagorny Karabakh through an agreement based on self-determination and conferring on Nagorny Karabakh the highest degree of self-rule within Azerbaijan; and guaranteed security for Nagorny Karabakh and its entire population, including mutual obligations to ensure compliance by all the parties with the provisions of the settlement.

Armenia was the only country out of 54 OSCE member States that rejected those principles. While speaking in favour of a peaceful settlement of the conflict at the earliest possible date, the Republic of Armenia received, during the period 1993 to 1996, a vast amount of Russian weaponry, far exceeding its requirements, including tanks, armoured vehicles and SCUD missiles, worth $1 billion. This clearly demonstrates that that country has not yet given up its aggressive plans.

In an address to permanent representatives of United Nations Member States during a visit to United Nations Headquarters last August, the President of Azerbaijan, Mr. Heydar Aliyev, stated that Azerbaijan had been and would continue to be in favour of a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Azerbaijan is ready to provide the Armenian population of the Nagorny Karabakh region with the broadest possible autonomy, in accordance with world standards, but it will never submit to seizure of part of its territory or allow a second Armenian State to be created at the expense of its own land.

Azerbaijan supported proposals submitted in September by the Co-Chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Conference, the United States, Russia and France. The elaboration of a draft agreement on cessation of the armed conflict on the basis of those proposals would create a solid foundation for achieving a breakthrough in the process of finding a settlement to the Armenia-Azerbaijan armed conflict.

The reform package for the United Nations proposed by the Secretary-General is a serious and fundamental document. Azerbaijan welcomes his report (A/51/950) as a real basis for conducting reforms in order to adapt the United Nations to today's rapidly changing demands and make it better prepared to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. Azerbaijan is prepared to cooperate with all Member States and with the Secretary-General and his reform team in order to achieve the goal that has been set.

We support the Secretary-General's realistic assessment that the main aim of the present reform is to narrow the gap between the aspirations and achievements of the United Nations. We think that establishing the position of Deputy Secretary-General, setting up a Senior Management Group, creating a Strategic Planning Unit and strengthening the executive committees of the sectoral groups, together with a number of other suggestions, constitute an interesting and comprehensive approach that will ensure the harmonious management and functioning of this Organization as it tackles the new and complex tasks of the twenty-first century.

We are of the view that, given the numerous pressing problems, the maintenance of peace and security throughout the world must continue to be the main mission of our Organization. In this regard, Azerbaijan welcomes and supports the Secretary-General's ideas on strengthening the potential of the United Nations in post-conflict peace-building, with the Department of Political Affairs as the focal point for this.

This matter is integrally linked to the issue of advancing the disarmament agenda. Accordingly, the idea of establishing a Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation, which would address the reduction and regulation of armaments and weapons of mass destruction, deserves every support.

With regard to disarmament as a whole, I would like to dwell on the urgent problem of the proliferation of conventional arms. The lack of norms regulating conventional arms causes serious concern. One cannot but agree with the Secretary-General when he says that such a situation creates a vicious circle, in that Member States seek assistance in the settlement of armed conflicts, while there is tough competition over arms exports, including exports to conflict areas where the United Nations is seeking to restore peace. All of this leads to the further escalation and prolongation of conflicts.

The expansion of the Security Council is a pressing, acute and complex issue. We believe that any increase in the number of permanent members of the Security Council must be confined to countries with the capacity and will to assume global responsibility, including financial responsibility, for the maintenance of international peace and security, and for sustainable development and stability. In this context, Azerbaijan has on several occasions spoken in favour of the candidatures of Germany and Japan, which in our view meet those requirements.

An increase in the number of non-permanent members of the Security Council should restore the principle of equitable geographic allocation of seats for all regional groups. In this connection, Azerbaijan supports an increase in the number of non-permanent members of the Security Council from the Group of Eastern European States, given that membership of the Group has doubled in the past five years. We believe that

one non-permanent seat for our Group in the Security Council does not reflect the current state of affairs and is not commensurate with the role played by the members of the Group in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Azerbaijan also supports the approach taken to the question of equitable representation of Asian, African, Latin American and Caribbean States in the Council. The issue of the total number of permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council should first be addressed from the perspective of maintaining and upgrading the efficiency of the Council.

We fully support the Secretary-General's idea that one of the main directions for United Nations reform must be to strengthen United Nations activities in the area of coordination of international cooperation for development.

We are convinced that at a time when the question of more rational use of United Nations resources, including financial resources, has become a priority, the Secretary-General's decision to focus on the activities that the United Nations can best carry out, from the standpoint both of using existing intellectual potential and of meeting the requirements of a large group of members of the international community, is very wise.

The Azerbaijani Republic greatly appreciates the nature and results of its cooperation with the United Nations system in the area of socio-economic development. Since our country joined the United Nations, dozens of large-scale development projects have been implemented in Azerbaijan with help from United Nations specialized agencies. These projects have had a positive impact on the all-round transformation of Azerbaijani society. I would like to make particular mention of the establishment of a free economic zone in the third largest city of Azerbaijan, Sumgait, and the programme to rehabilitate the territories of Azerbaijan liberated from Armenian occupation.

We welcome the idea of establishing a United Nations Development Group, and we believe that strengthening coordination in the activities of the various agencies will add to the efficiency of the operational development activities of the Organization. Among the factors that could help us achieve this goal are the elaboration of a comprehensive strategy for the activities of specialized agencies vis-à-vis the recipient countries, the elimination of overlap in functions and programmes, a renewed concentration on priorities, and the improvement of partnership mechanisms with State institutions and non-governmental organizations of Member States.

But all these good wishes and hopes may prove to be simply an unattainable dream if they are not accompanied by a relevant resource base. In this respect, Mr. Kofi Annan's idea of creating a new system for mobilizing core resources for development purposes, through voluntary contributions and negotiated pledges that would be made available in multi-year tranches, is to be commended and supported. We are convinced that it is necessary to provide the broadest possible mandate for the Secretary-General's proposed Office for Development Financing.

We welcome the Secretary-General's proposal to deepen and expand the partnership between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions with a view to strengthening cooperation and increasing the rationalization and coordination of activities. In recent years Azerbaijan has accumulated considerable experience through fruitful cooperation with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Thanks to this cooperation it has been possible to improve the overall economic situation in the Republic, to curb rampant inflation and restore economic growth.

Reforming the structure of the Secretariat departments dealing with social and economic matters and conferring new functions on the Economic and Social Council are, in our view, logical elements of the comprehensive reform programme proposed by the Secretary-General.

At the same time, it is obvious that reform will not produce the best results if the finances of the Organization are not put into good order. Given this fact, we understand the proposal for the establishment, as a temporary measure until the Organization's financial situation is on a solid basis, of a Revolving Credit Fund with initial capital of up to $1 billion financed from voluntary contributions or other means that Member States may wish to suggest. In this connection we also fully support the Secretary-General's proposal to open a development account.

We are also firmly convinced that reforming the personnel policy of the United Nations should be an inseparable part of the reform. We are deeply concerned by the fact that even today Azerbaijan is still not represented in the Secretariat.

In recent years the world has been overwhelmed by a wave of extraordinary situations resulting from armed conflict, natural disasters and economic crises. As a consequence of these situations millions of people have lost their homes, been deprived of food and basic living conditions and have become refugees and displaced persons. This issue is of particular relevance to Azerbaijan, as refugees and displaced persons in the Republic are in dire need of emergency humanitarian assistance. Recently, several regions of Azerbaijan suffered flooding as a result of continuous rainfall, which inflicted serious damage on the economy and the people. Azerbaijan greatly appreciates the humanitarian activities of the United Nations aimed at protecting and saving the victims of armed conflict and natural disasters.

We fully endorse the idea contained in the Secretary-General's report that humanitarian actions today extend beyond the mere provision of relief and also entail early warning, prevention, advocacy and rehabilitation as well as assistance for transition to long-term development. At the same time we hope that structural changes — such as the creation of the Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator to replace the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the mobilizing of its efforts to deal more effectively with complex emergencies — will not result in a decrease in humanitarian assistance for single recipient countries that are faced with the consequences of armed conflicts, foreign aggression and occupation and that have hundreds of thousands — even millions — of refugees and displaced persons.

This also applies to the suggested reforms of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), of whose Executive Board Azerbaijan is a member. We believe it necessary to maintain the independence of UNICEF in the areas of fund-raising and contacts with donors to ensure contributions for funding the programmes of the organization and accountability to donors with regard to how the funds are spent. We consider it important that the specialized agencies continue to have specific goals and mechanisms to achieve those goals. At the same time we support the proposals regarding a common starting point, close coordination and interaction, and the adoption of measures to avoid overlap and the dissipation of resources.

UNICEF's mandate includes not only the development of children, but their protection and survival. The United Nations Children's Fund, together with such entities as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Programme, becomes actively involved in saving the lives of children in emergencies. There is an effective mechanism for interaction between UNICEF and humanitarian organizations, donors, Governments and local and international non-governmental organizations. We hope that the establishment of the United Nations Development Group will not weaken but, on the contrary, strengthen this function of UNICEF.

We support the idea of common premises for United Nations missions at the country level, to be called "UN House". This would certainly encourage closer and more effective interaction between specialized agencies and United Nations programmes. As for Resident Coordinators, we believe it would be expedient to select them from representatives of all interested organizations. A mechanism such as rotation should be worked out for this. We also support the idea of convening joint committees and consecutive meetings of relevant executive boards.

On the eve of the twenty-first century, it is high time to consolidate the efforts of all countries for a resolute attack on crime, drug abuse and terrorism. Organized underworld groups that enjoy access to sophisticated technologies and weaponry are challenging law and order as well as economic, political and other institutions, not only in individual countries but in entire regions and throughout the world. The United Nations must be at the forefront of the battle to curtail the activities of such groups. At the same time, we need to ensure that the efforts of the international community are centralized if we are to succeed in crushing crime and drug abuse. In this context we support the idea of uniting the United Nations International Drug Control Programme with a new Centre for International Crime Prevention to create a new Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, to be located in Vienna.

Ensuring human rights remains one of the most important of the Organization's fields of activity. It is especially urgent today when the issue of human rights permeates all aspects of public life and is equally relevant to all countries and all regions of the world. Human rights are closely connected with political, economic, social and other processes. The events of recent years have demonstrated that expansionist actions on the part of some States, aggressive separatism and economic difficulties deprive States of their ability adequately to defend and ensure the human rights of their citizens. That is why the United Nations will have to strengthen its activities, exposing and neutralizing the factors that lead to human rights abuse. We approve in particular of the

measures recommended by the Secretary-General with regard to existing or potential conflicts or post-conflict situations affecting human rights.

We believe it right to suggest that the issue of human rights must be considered to an equal degree in all four substantive fields of the Secretariat's work programme: peace and security, economic and social affairs, development cooperation and humanitarian affairs. In the context of enhancing the work of the Organization's divisions in the field of human rights, we commend the consolidation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights into a single Office of the High Commissioner. This will strengthen that entity and lay the groundwork for more efficient use of available human and financial resources.

The Secretary-General's report "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform" (A/51/950) is a comprehensive and far-reaching set of changes aimed at overhauling the Organization. The quintessential idea of the report that reform should constitute a continuous and steady process, not a quick fix, is of particular significance.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that the suggested measures and recommendations are aimed both at creating new structures of leadership and management and at harmonizing the activities of all bodies of the United Nations.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency The Honourable Billie Miller, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Tourism and International Transport of Barbados.

Mrs. Miller (Barbados): Mr. President, it is my pleasure to congratulate you on your election, to share the confidence expressed in your leadership, and to pledge the cooperation of the Barbados delegation in the work of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

I also wish to convey our deep appreciation to His Excellency Ambassador Razali Ismail for his outstanding stewardship of the fifty-first session. My delegation welcomed the firm management and dispatch of the General Assembly agenda which characterized his tenure as President. We would wish that this businesslike approach reflect the new direction of a reformed United Nations, more efficient and more effective, to face the challenge of rapid global change.

The Assembly meets again for its review of the global political scene against a background of recurring strife and conflict in many parts of the world. The increasing demands on the resources of the Organization continue to hamper implementation of its priority mission in the post-cold-war world, namely, promoting sustainable development and, in particular, the elimination of absolute poverty.

My delegation believes that the United Nations must remain the conscience of the international community in the fight against poverty and misery, which afflict so many of the world's people. Yet we face the stark reality that without peace, the fruits of development and the goals of economic and social justice will remain for them a distant dream.

The numerous conflicts, both old and new, which darken the global political scene underline the need for a new urgency in the quest for peace, so wherever conflict exists we call on all concerned parties to redouble their efforts towards reconciliation and to accelerate the conditions for stability and economic and social progress for their people.

But, as we look to the new millennium, we believe that prospects for an era of lasting peace must extend beyond traditional responses to conflict after they have erupted. The promotion of a "Culture of Peace", launched by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), holds considerable promise. It focuses greater attention on prevention and addresses the cause of conflict at its roots. We share the view of UNESCO that this challenge is broad and far-reaching and would require priority commitment by the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations, and civil society.

Institutional reform and restructuring at both the national and multilateral levels in response to rapid global change is an imperative, not an option. Barbados strongly supports the United Nations reform process, and has followed with deep interest the progress of the various Working Groups.

Mr. Teilo (Mexico), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Working Group on an Agenda for Development has completed its task. We now have a comprehensive document which embodies the main development priorities contained in the various programmes of action. But if the Agenda is to be implemented, it must claim

wide ownership, not only among the organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, but among the operational Ministries of Governments as well — in particular, Ministries of Finance. Here we remain concerned that the critical question of the future financing of development has not been resolved. This has heightened uncertainty about the international commitment to development cooperation, through which the United Nations system has played such an important supportive role in developing countries.

Negotiations taking place in the Working Group on reform of the Security Council should facilitate, not limit, opportunities for membership of developing countries, and reflect the altered structure of the Organization since 1965. Barbados attaches particular importance to the principle of openness and transparency in the work of the Council and welcomes the steps already taken in this direction through regular briefings and monthly assessments by Council Presidents.

Difficult negotiations remain on key issues, including the size of the Council, the nature of its enlargement and the use of the veto. We must now step up consultations, drawing on the useful proposals submitted by Member States and the Co-Chairmen of the Group. We hope such negotiations can be conducted in a timely and open manner, in a spirit of compromise, and to the general satisfaction of all.

The report on the strengthening of the United Nations system contains many important recommendations for improving the role and functioning of the General Assembly and the accountability and efficiency of the Secretariat. Some may argue that these proposals do not go far enough. In the view of my delegation, however, they constitute a firm basis on which the effectiveness of these organs can be built. We look forward to their implementation.

My delegation remains deeply concerned about the prolonged financial crisis facing the Organization and the serious implications for its long-term viability. We believe that the United Nations is at the crossroads. Payment of assessed contributions in full, on time and without conditions is a hallowed treaty obligation of Member States. Unilateral conditions, however convenient, constitute a dangerous precedent which could hobble the United Nations and the reform process for many years to come. We urge the Working Group concerned to step up its efforts to put the Organization on a more secure financial footing.

Against this background of United Nations system reform, we welcome the second phase of the Secretary-General's reform programme "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform". It contains many far-reaching proposals designed to streamline the organizational and management structure of the United Nations and to improve its overall effectiveness. My delegation will participate actively in the relevant forum which will consider this report, and seek greater clarification and specificity on a number of key recommendations.

In principle, however, we believe that as chief executive officer, accountable to Member States for the Organization's performance, the Secretary-General must be able to implement those management actions within his immediate authority. At the same time, we would caution that reform should not be driven by staff reduction targets, nor predetermined by budgetary constraints. We believe reform should be guided by the mandated objectives and priorities set by Member States, as reflected in the various programmes of action of the global conferences, and the financial and human resources required to implement them.

The scientific achievements of this century have been truly spectacular. We have visited the Moon and lived in outer space for months. We have made great advances in medicine and genetic engineering, in information technology, in high-speed mass transport and in food production, to mention only a few. Yet so much remains to be done. Abject poverty, disease, illiteracy and ill-health still afflict far too many fellow inhabitants of this planet as we approach the new millennium.

This Organization has done much to alleviate suffering. But it can continue to do so, and do so more effectively, only if Member States, according to their capacities, give unselfishly of the financial and technical resources necessary for the execution of its social programmes.

In Barbados, our own national development programmes underscore the Government's assignment of highest priority to the social sectors, which at present account for almost 40 per cent of total Government expenditure. Through sustained economic growth, supplemented by an effective social safety net, the Government aims to spread the benefits of development to all its people. Among new major programmes are Edu tech 2000, a five-year education-sector programme aimed at enhancing the use of information technology by

students and teachers, and the Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme, known as YES, which provides training, business counselling, mentorship and access to finance for young entrepreneurs.

While our strong commitment to social policy has paid rich dividends, as illustrated by the successive high rankings of Barbados in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) human development index, emerging problems largely associated with poverty, particularly among youth, are of critical concern.

The Government has therefore launched a major initiative in collaboration with UNDP to elaborate a plan of action for poverty alleviation including the feasibility of a social-investment funding scheme. It will target pockets of poverty throughout the country and provide funding for programmes submitted by local non-governmental organizations and community groups, focusing on skills acquisition and community empowerment. Through related policies, the Government is implementing measures to promote gender parity and the full integration of women and youth in the development process.

Barbados enjoys a robust democracy and so recognizes the increasing influence of civil society in shaping national policy. The Government has taken a number of actions to foster and to strengthen this participatory process, including the establishment of National Commissions on Social Justice and on Reform of the Constitution. This underscores the highest priority we give to social justice and democracy and the importance we attach to keeping these fundamental rights under periodic review.

Barbados participated actively within the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) during the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, which reviewed the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. We consider the Rio Conference to be one of the great achievements of the United Nations. It underscored the integration of environment and development policies through a comprehensive programme of action -- Agenda 21 — which speaks to the very survival of our planet. More particularly, it called the attention of the international community to the special vulnerabilities of small island developing States through the follow-up Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of the Small Island Developing States, and the Barbados Programme of Action which it adopted.

Barbados shared with other developing countries the expectation that the special session would rekindle the spirit of Rio and reaffirm the commitments made for the financing of sustainable development. The special session clearly fell short of these expectations. Since Rio, progress has been made in enacting international law and conventions in the areas of biodiversity, the seas, climate change and desertification, and in implementing environmental policies at the national level. But the failure of donors to honour commitments on finance and technology was clearly the most crucial factor limiting further implementation of Agenda 21.

We welcome, however, the decision to hold a two-day special session to review the Barbados Programme of Action in 1999. It is our hope that this review will reinforce the long-term viability of this Programme and underscore the vital role small island developing States play as a laboratory for the study of environmental change in the interest of all countries. While recognizing that, through self-help, small island developing States must do more to revitalize the Barbados Programme, we urge the international community to provide greater financial support to strengthen its implementation, especially its information network and technical assistance components. The upcoming Caribbean ministerial meeting on the plan of action, scheduled to be held in Barbados in November, will give strategic direction to our preparatory work over the next several months.

I wish to turn briefly to specific developments of major concern to the Caribbean region. The vulnerability of our region, both environmental and economic, is a daily reality. On the emerald isle of Montserrat, nature has dealt a most cruel blow. There the people face not just the effects of a natural calamity, but the distinct possibility that their island home and way of life could be obliterated. The eruption of the Lange Soufriere Hills Volcano shows no signs of abating. Barbados has joined its Caribbean Community (CARICOM) partners in providing financial and material assistance to the people of our sister isle in this time of crisis. We urge the international community to come to the assistance of this beleaguered island.

Man-made disasters can be no less cruel. The recent decision of the World Trade Organization panel on the banana question has threatened the very lifeline of the exporting countries of the region. We know that diversification is the long-term answer. But such economic transformation cannot be achieved overnight or without consistent support from the international

community. Barbados joins affected countries in appealing for such support.

Last June Barbados and the other CARICOM States welcomed Haiti as the fourteenth member of our Community. Haiti's future is now linked to CARICOM's future.

In supporting Haiti during its critical hour, CARICOM countries cautioned then, and we do so again now, that the task ahead would be long and difficult and that progress would be uneven, and urged the international community to stay the course with Haiti. We are therefore grateful not just to the Security Council for agreeing to a United Nations Transition Mission in Haiti whose mandate extends to 30 November 1997, but also to the Friends of the Secretary-General for Haiti, and to other concerned delegations that made this compromise possible. This extension will further professionalize the National Police force and enhance its capacity to secure the stability on which democracy and development can flourish.

In May 1997 Barbados had the honour to host the CARICOM/United States summit on partnership for prosperity and security in the Caribbean. It underlined our mutual economic and security interests and opened a new chapter in the CARICOM/United States partnership, consistent with the changing global economy.

The summit adopted the Bridgetown Declaration of Principles. It will guide an ambitious action plan designed to promote sustainable development and foster democracy, peace, and economic and social progress in the region. Barbados considers the summit an important landmark in CARICOM/United States cooperation. We look forward to monitoring the action plan at annual meetings of CARICOM Foreign Ministers and the Secretary of State of the United States of America, starting early in 1998. We trust that this process of consultation will embrace the concerns of Caribbean countries over a number of critical issues, such as the adverse impact of recent immigration policy on the very fabric of Caribbean society.

Barbados and the CARICOM States have been particularly concerned with the threat to democracy and society posed by drug trafficking, crime and violence, money laundering and corruption. Our efforts to rid the Caribbean of those scourges have centred on increased cooperation and information sharing and on the strengthening and training of our police and coastguard forces. We welcome the valuable support for these efforts by our bilateral partners as well as by the Regional Office for the Caribbean of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme. The special session of the General Assembly on the issue of drugs next year will provide a valuable opportunity to share our experiences and also to learn from those of others.

Let me comment briefly on the phenomenon of globalization, which has reshaped the development landscape, with far-reaching implications for the Caribbean Community. The reordering and strengthening of CARICOM-United States cooperation are an integral part of our adaptation to this powerful impulse. Through the liberalization of trade, finance and services and the rapid expansion of telecommunications and information technology, developing countries have become a driving force in this process, although the level and pace of integration differ widely among countries. Barbados shares the anxiety of small developing States, which are highly vulnerable to marginalization in this fiercely competitive environment given our sparse natural and human-resource base and limited administrative and technical capacity.

Globalization presents new opportunities for trade and investment — witness the performance of East Asian economies. But the gains have been largely reaped by the stronger countries, leaving the weak even more disadvantaged and the inequality between and within countries even more pronounced. It is for this reason that we urge the United Nations to play a greater advocacy role on behalf of vulnerable States in the policy dialogue on globalization.

The CARICOM States recognize that we must strengthen our technical capacity to negotiate effectively our integration into the global economy. Accordingly, regional negotiating machinery has been established to manage these crucial negotiations, which will determine our future relations with major trading blocs.

This fifty-second session of the General Assembly has before it many critical issues. It must guide the reform process, which, in effect, will determine the very future of the Organization. It must come to terms with the chronic and grave financial crisis that threatens the Organization's integrity and viability. It must redouble its efforts to foster reconciliation and stability in the many strife-torn countries where millions of people remain trapped in poverty and deprivation.

Barbados believes that this indispensable institution can meet these challenges. But it must expeditiously put

its house in order so that it can intensify its efforts with regard to the priorities that define its unique mission of peace, development, democracy and social justice.

Barbados pledges its full commitment and support.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the Chairman of the delegation of Djibouti, His Excellency Mr. Roble Olhaye.

Mr. Olhaye (Djibouti): I wish to extend to the President the warm congratulations of my delegation on his election to preside over the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. We are on the verge of what may be a defining moment in the direction and capabilities of the Organization. His vast diplomatic experience assures us that at this moment the reins will indeed be in very capable hands.

We must also deeply thank his predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, for the high level of relevance, focus and commitment achieved at the fifty-first session under his bold and astute stewardship as President. His forthright appraisals of the critical issues facing the Organization, particularly the extraordinary impetus he injected into the question of the reform of the United Nations, will be felt well into the next millennium.

We are also very pleased to offer our sincere congratulations to the new Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. In less than a year since assuming that high responsibility he has already brought his considerable experience and vision to bear on the operations of the United Nations. Throughout his long and faithful service with the United Nations he has demonstrated a keen awareness of the need for a strong and responsive Organization. His all-encompassing reform proposals go a long way towards realizing a dream that has often eluded us in the past. We are confident he will persevere in his onerous task of keeping the Organization afloat.

The report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization is an excellent starting point for an overview of the principal issues confronting mankind today. On the one hand, there are widespread ripple effects emanating from the end of the cold war, the advent of a single global market and the trend towards democratization and respect for human rights. On the other hand, there are the ominous trends towards the fragmentation of societies, the search for new identities and the consequent spread of civil strife and conflict. Today, therefore, the need to deal with post-conflict situations is as critical as the need to prevent them. There is now universal recognition that much of this conflict is the result of the widespread poverty and severe underdevelopment facing many societies.

For an economy to overcome poverty and underdevelopment it must today participate in the global economy, which has become a driving force in the world. The 1997 *World Economic and Social Survey* suggests that all developing countries and countries with economies in transition need to raise per capita income by at least 3 per cent annually. To achieve that, however, the *Survey* contends, and the Secretary-General agrees, the less affluent countries, in particular, require a more conducive external economic environment than now exists for them.

The elements that until quite recently served to define our world have dramatically and rapidly changed. The predominant concerns of global atomic warfare and the cold war and the destructive policies of colonialism and apartheid have quickly given way to the challenges of poverty, globalism and development. This has created an unprecedented demand for the services of the United Nations at a time when it is facing critical challenges in a world of revolutionary change.

To remain relevant, the United Nations must carry out fundamental structural adjustments or changes, which can no longer be addressed through ad hoc, piecemeal reforms. A coordinated, top-down, comprehensive reform of the entire edifice is necessary to overhaul and streamline the Secretariat; create a new organizational culture and focus; consolidate functions; do away with overlapping programmes and duplications; eliminate financial waste; mobilize new resources for development; and strengthen and enhance coordination of United Nations operations at the field level. The savings derived from such rationalizations, trimming of inefficiencies and administrative costs could be directed to development for economic and social activities. These, it seems, are precisely the aims of the Secretary-General's extensive and far-reaching proposals, issued under the title "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform". They are a serious and bold set of proposals that deserve our utmost consideration. Djibouti fully supports the proposals and endorses their implementation as a package.

The General Assembly at this session has demonstrated overwhelming support for the Secretary-General's reform proposals, particularly in their design

as an integrated package. They should be considered as such by this plenary. It would be helpful to look at the proposals as the United Nations equivalent of the World Bank's new Strategic Compact. Each initiative is intended to take its respective organization into the next millennium by bringing about a fundamental renewal of the institution.

We know that every element of the Secretary-General's package may not generate agreement across the board. Divergences of views are bound to occur and are to be expected. Indeed, genuine fears, even scepticism, have been voiced against a reform process that may translate simply into a cost-cutting exercise, which ultimately may mean less focus on underdevelopment, poverty and social dislocations. These are valid concerns which I am sure the Secretary-General is conscious of and must address. But for the sake of the larger purpose at stake, let us refrain from minuscule nit-picking. We need, rather, to adopt a pragmatic and positive approach to the package. In this way, we can spare ourselves from long and protracted, if not interminable, discussions which, as we know from experience, too often end in committee gridlock, a type of paralysis by analysis.

Bowing to the realities of the Organization's dire financial predicament, the Secretary-General has accordingly fashioned a credible reorganization that will enhance efficiency and responsiveness and effectively contribute to a strengthened Untied Nations, capable of fulfilling its mission.

There appears to be a near universal consensus on the need to reform the United Nations. Regrettably though, much of the impetus is dictated by the Organization's acute financial situation. Were all Member States to honour their treaty commitments to pay their assessment obligations in full, on time and without condition, reform would focus more on what the United Nations can and must do than on what it cannot and is unable to do. An effective United Nations cannot operate on subsistence, hand-to-mouth and ever dwindling resources that perpetually keep it on the brink of bankruptcy.

Ultimately, the financial solvency of the United Nations is the responsibility of Member States. Sound finances are the sine qua non of the effectiveness and stability of the Organization. Without a continuous and predictable flow of resources, the danger posed to the independence, if not survival, of the United Nations is very real.

The issue of Security Council reform need not be linked to the reform proposal presented by the Secretary-General. The latter must run its own course and, acted upon independently, culminate in a resolution for its adoption.

In step with the growth in membership of the Organization, the Council must be enlarged to reflect the pressing need for equitable representation. In view of the considerable debate this issue has generated over the years, we believe that the time has come for a change in the Security Council, particularly with the admission of new permanent members from all the regions of the world and from the industrialized countries, wielding the same powers as the existing ones. As we all know, a cardinal tenet of the thesis of good governance is that all members of a body politic have a fair and equal role in decisions which affect them. Djibouti fully endorses the position of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Non-Aligned Movement regarding the expansion, composition and working methods of the Council.

Except as a metaphor for international peacekeeping failure, Somalia has exited the international radar screen of concern. This is regrettable, for there have been persistent regional and international efforts to initiate dialogue among the parties. True, much of Somalia continues to exist in a cycle of misery and political impasse, lacking a central authority, internal security and national cohesion. The spread of conventional weapons has engendered insecurity and political uncertainty — a looming threat even to the warlords and to the long-range prospects for peace in the country and the region. Perhaps, as is often the case, there may be foreign elements that are developing profitable interests under the present state of anarchy.

There is, however, a growing and encouraging emergence of a movement to reconstitute some form of national structure and to set aside differences. We cannot ignore this glimmer of hope, however elusive. With one or two notable exceptions, the factions seem to have resolved to hold a conference this November in Somalia, in the town of Bossaso. The aim is to establish an interim authority whose main task will be to prepare the groundwork for drafting a constitution, holding elections and the emergence, hopefully, of a national Government. This subregional effort, spearheaded by Ethiopia, not only enjoys the wide support of many Governments and organizations, but is perhaps the most promising initiative at the moment.

The interminable stalling of progress towards reconciliation, the stifling stalemate, must come to an end. The time has come to say to our Somali sisters and brothers, "Enough is enough!" Enough misery, mayhem, bloodshed and destruction. Enough of the senseless indifference to and reckless disregard for life, property and nationhood. Enough of the grim prospects of an uncertain future for a whole generation of Somalis. Enough of assigning Somalia to the footnotes of history. In the final analysis, the creativity, vision and determination of the Somali people shall prevail. For all its anarchy and destruction, Somalia can benefit from the example of Liberia, which, like Somalia, was a country written off, a country in name only, just a few months ago. There as well, conflict between warlords and factions succeeded only in bringing the country to its knees. Now, through concerted dialogue and determination, and constant prodding by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the United Nations, elections have been held and stability and peace reestablished, and there is a legitimate Government which enjoys international recognition. The same could be true for Somalia.

The countries of the region, the United Nations, nations with a historic relationship with Somalia and the international community at large must support, morally as well as materially, the ongoing efforts to bring about dialogue, reconciliation, lasting peace and harmony in Somalia. As in Liberia, that may be the gist of the message Somalia is sending the international community at this critical juncture. We must respond, and respond united, with one voice.

By virtue of the close proximity and the many common factors that bind us together, Djibouti has a special interest in the destiny and well-being of the Somali people. That is why, as far back as 1991, at the advent of the conflict, we took the lead in bringing the contending parties together in two successive and substantive reconciliation conferences in Djibouti. Since then we have remained seized of the situation there. It is well known that Djibouti has received a staggering flow of refugees from Somalia, which, in relation to our size and resources, has been overwhelming. This mammoth humanitarian undertaking on our part is indeed beyond our capacity to sustain indefinitely. We appeal to the international community to continue to be supportive of our sacrifices by contributing substantially towards the mitigation of this burden.

The Horn of Africa region is passing through a period of relative stability and rejuvenation. The aftermaths of previous conflicts are still visible, of course, in the extent of physical, institutional and human destruction. Reconstruction will require genuine regional cooperation. Our peoples, our land, our waters and coastlines and our economies are too interdependent to survive in isolation. That is the spirit which must prevail.

We have an important regional institution in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which serves as a regional focus for development cooperation and conflict resolution. Its capability and resources deserve the continued support of the international community.

Djibouti continues its economic transformation, institutional reform and demobilization process. For each of these we continue to require generous international assistance, and towards this end wish to express our appreciation for the commitments pledged during the round-table conference held in May this year under the umbrella of the United Nations Development Programme and the Bretton Woods institutions.

The legacy of past instability, widespread conflict and State collapse in the Horn of Africa have had many disruptive consequences for Djibouti. No doubt we suffered in tandem with our neighbours. But we are confident our efforts to deal with these difficulties will be supported by the international community.

The Mid-Term Review of the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development *Least Developed Countries 1997* report indicate that the ominous slide suffered by many least developed countries during the 1980s was reversed in 1995, and improvements continued into 1996. Despite declines in commodity prices and terms of trade, a number of least developed countries have enjoyed positive growth rates, indicating the beneficial effects of ongoing structural adjustment efforts. These encouraging signs complemented efforts towards democratization, good governance and regional economic cooperation.

Nowadays it is commonly accepted that as more peoples and countries participate in the global economy, production and wealth increase for everyone. It is equally true, however, that in this era of rapid globalization many developing countries with small markets, poor infrastructures, unskilled manpower and high levels of external debt are excluded from the benefits of globalization and are unable to cope with the challenges.

Most of the least developed countries — and 33 of the world's 48 are in Africa — face the risk of further marginalization despite determined efforts towards reforms which must merit greater international support.

Coupled with this is the falling of official development assistance, which Norway's Minister for Development Cooperation described as unacceptable, since the poorest countries need to finance basic social services and infrastructure as well as capacity-building and competence.

The least developed countries, particularly those in Africa, tread a fine line between sustainable progress and decline. They are expected to carry out extensive reforms while concurrently addressing the social needs brought about by widespread poverty, environmental degradation and urban explosions. Africa also continues to attract negligible foreign direct investment flows, which are largely concentrated in a few countries.

The internal conflicts raging in a number of African countries seriously further undermine an already fragile regional stability. African leaders and organizations such as the Organization of African Unity, the Economic Community of West African States, IGAD and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), together with the international community, are engaged in active and relentless efforts to bring about cessation of hostilities, reconciliations and the re-establishment of law and order.

On the positive side, we congratulate Liberia for having finally overcome the prolonged and sustained bloodshed and self-destruction. We deplore however, growing signs of a resurgence of hostilities in Angola, and we condemn the overthrow of Sierra Leone's constitutional and legitimate Government. We hope the efforts of the countries of the region through ECOWAS will be crowned with success.

Likewise, we applaud the tenacity of President Omar Bongo of Gabon and Ambassador Mohamed Sahnoun, the United Nations/Organization of African Unity Special Representative, in the effort to secure a durable ceasefire in Brazzaville and to find a political solution in the face of open and undisguised challenges to the authority of the elected President.

Similar challenges have either succeeded or stalemated in Burundi, the Central African Republic and, now, Comoros. We hope reason will eventually prevail in all these situations so that the people are spared further strife and uncertainty.

In this context, I welcome the timely initiative by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, to convene a special ministerial meeting of the United Nations Security Council on Africa, which took place on 25 September 1997. We believe such bold initiatives will help mitigate the ominous tendencies of increasing insularity and inward focus of many developed countries, where events in far-off places no longer seem so relevant to core interests within them.

We welcome Secretary of State Albright's injection of new momentum into the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. Unilateral decisions by Israel must stop, and Israel must also refrain from actions which continuously disrupt and divert the direction of the talks. Contrary to what Israel wants us to believe, the peace process has not been faltering on account of the suicide bombings alone — which, unfortunately, took many lives — but because of Israel's refusal to implement terms of the Interim Agreement.

No one, of course, condones the bombings, with their gruesome human toll. They are acts which must be condemned and only underscore the urgency of resuming the peace process with a genuine determination. The punishment meted out on Palestinian territories has only further aggravated an explosive situation. Predictably, the economic effects have been devastating. Ironically, Oslo had convinced a majority of Palestinians that it might be possible to coexist with Israel in peace under an independent Palestinian State controlling its own destiny. Yet now they are little more than security hostages under relentless coercion and pressures.

The basic situation in Palestine has not changed. Israel needs security and peace; Palestinians need land, as well as peace and security. Neither can unilaterally dictate terms to the other side. Escalating punishment will not bring security. Israel needs to demonstrate its seriousness and its willingness to move towards secure peace in the Middle East and towards credible negotiations and lasting settlement on the basis of resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), and 425 (1978), exchanging land for peace.

For the overwhelming majority of humanity the disillusioning regression in the peace process has caused deep anguish. It would be a pity if the yearning for peace, security, justice and resolution continues to be

eschewed and misdirected. We are quite hopeful Secretary Albright will persevere to keep the process on track.

Once again we implore Iran and the United Arab Emirates to commence serious negotiations to peacefully resolve the dispute regarding the three islands occupied by Iran.

The recently concluded Oslo Diplomatic Conference seeking a worldwide ban on the production, distribution, stockpiling and use of landmines was clearly a watershed event. We welcome this landmark achievement, which now provides us with a vehicle to stop the slaughter of so many thousands of human beings each year by the 110 million devices already in place all over the world.

To prevent our global village from becoming an armed camp, the landmine Convention, to be signed in Ottawa this December, is perhaps as critical as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Chemical Weapons Convention. Landmines are surely as dangerous as terrorism, drug trafficking and international mobs.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call His Excellency Mr. Shukheriin Altangerel, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia.

Mr. Altangerel (Mongolia) (*spoke in Mongolian; English text furnished by the delegation*): It gives me pleasure to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Udovenko, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, on his unanimous election to the presidency of the current session of the General Assembly and to wish him success in the discharge of his important responsibilities and duties. May I also thank Mr. Razali, Permanent Representative of Malaysia, the outgoing President, for his able stewardship and for the initiatives he undertook during the past session.

The disintegration of the bipolar world structure and the end of the cold war are creating favourable conditions for realizing the goals and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. Globalization — vigorous economic integration and interdependence — is becoming a prevailing tendency throughout the world. The fundamental changes that international relations are undergoing, as well as the new challenges and global agendas, demand from the United Nations, its specialized agencies and the Member States new visions and collective efforts and actions commensurate to these realities. I wish to underline that the overwhelming majority of the international community recognizes these changes, is adjusting accordingly and is contributing to this process. It is hardly possible to visualize our common future if we do not jointly solve the socio-economic problems and the questions posed by underdevelopment, unemployment, hunger, poverty, disease, crime natural disasters.

Mongolia stands for making the United Nations an effective and efficient organization able to meet the challenges of the new millennium — a political, economic and legal instrument capable of safeguarding the interests of all nations, especially the small ones, on the basis of equality and justice.

United Nations reform has been a subject of substantive debate in recent years. It is therefore natural that the reform agenda, in particular the Secretary-General's report on a programme for reform, is at the centre of attention at this session. Mongolia duly commends the constructive efforts of the Secretary-General to reform the United Nations and overcome its present financial crisis. It thus welcomes the reform programme he submitted to the General Assembly. We believe that thorough consideration should be given to the specific proposals, such as a reasonable reduction of the staff of the Secretariat, allocation of the resulting savings to acceleration of development, establishment of the post of Deputy Secretary-General and creation of a United Nations Development Group so as to improve coordination and management. It is clear that United Nations reform is not an event, but rather a process. We share the view that it is a continuous process, the end result of which should be measured by the increase in the efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations.

Mongolia supports the view that the expansion of the Security Council's permanent and non-permanent membership should provide equal regional representation and that the Council's activities should be democratized and made more transparent. Despite the enlargement of the Council membership, the overwhelming majority of Member States will still not be directly represented. Therefore, Mongolia's proposal to institutionalize the fuller participation of Member States in the Council proceedings, including its formal meetings, is finding increasing support within the Organization.

Mongolia appreciates and supports the Secretary-General's efforts to give priority to socio-economic questions, to invigorate United Nations development activities and enhance international cooperation for development. To this end it is vital that the United Nations and its specialized agencies and international

trade and financial institutions intensify their activities in this area and better coordinate their interactions.

Today it is universally accepted that sustainable development could be attained if it were approached in a comprehensive manner, and that sustained economic growth is closely linked with social development and environmental protection. It is gratifying to note that the Agenda for Development, adopted this year, has been drawn up precisely in this spirit. We consider it an important document that defines the strategy of international cooperation for development, and we believe that implementation of its provisions is vitally important.

The special session of the General Assembly held last June reviewed and assessed the implementation of the Rio summit decisions and outlined future actions. Since Agenda 21, adopted five years ago in Rio de Janeiro, has not been fully realized, the international community should accord greater attention to its complete implementation.

Mongolia believes that implementing the important decisions and recommendations of the summit conferences held under United Nations auspices in the early 1990s is crucial for consolidating the positive trends in world social development and redoubling international cooperation for poverty alleviation, human rights protection, food security, the environment, advancement of women, protection of the rights of the child and sustainable human settlement.

While fostering international cooperation for development, it is important to accord high priority to addressing the problems of the most disadvantaged developing countries that have unfavourable locations, severe climate and underdeveloped infrastructure. Landlocked developing countries, handicapped by their geographical location and remoteness from world markets, face tremendous obstacles and hardships in their efforts for development and advancement. Reality shows that these countries risk becoming marginalized from the ongoing globalization process in the world economy and international trade. Therefore, it is imperative for the international community to increase its support of and cooperation with these countries, as envisaged in the Agenda for Development.

It is gratifying to note that landlocked developing countries are taking concrete steps to develop transit transport cooperation with their transit neighbours. My Government believes that the first-ever North-east Asia Subregional Consultative Meeting on Transit Transportation, held in Ulan Bator this year, has laid the groundwork for the development of such regional cooperation.

The notion of and criteria for defining international peace and security are undergoing changes. With the improvement of the international political climate, the dangers posed by nuclear war and the arms race are receding, while prospects for taking concrete steps on practical disarmament are improving. The very concept of security based primarily on the size of armed forces and military alliances or associations has also been changing. It now includes the level of development and progress, wealth and the well-being of peoples, as well as the extent to which human rights and fundamental freedoms are insured. All this must find due reflection in United Nations activities.

I am pleased to inform the General Assembly that last July Mongolia ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Given the paramount significance of the Treaty, Mongolia believes that there is an urgent need to have it enter into force as soon as possible, to implement its provisions strictly and to make operational its international verification system.

The international community must take specific measures designed to act on the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the obligation to pursue and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control.

The Government of Mongolia is pleased with the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. Its ratification by the United States of America and a pledge by the Russian Federation — these being the two major Powers possessing substantial arsenals of these weapons of mass destruction — to ratify that Convention are important prerequisites for subsequent successful enforcement.

In the past few years the trend to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones has been gaining momentum. Mongolia is pursuing a policy of maintaining the size of its armed forces and its defence expenditures at the lowest possible level and of ensuring its independence and national security primarily by political and diplomatic means. In 1992 Mongolia declared its territory a nuclear-weapon-free zone, and it is now seeking to institutionalize this status internationally. Within this framework, we

presented to the last session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission a working paper on the basic principles and elements of the concept of the single-State nuclear-weapon-free zone. I take this opportunity to express our firm support for the proposal to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones in other regions, particularly in Central Asia, and our readiness to work actively for realizing this.

It is regrettable that sources of tension and conflict persist in some regions of the world. International peace and security would be strengthened if the parties concerned were to display political will and utmost restraint in resolving their differences by negotiation and other peaceful means.

Bearing in mind the importance of strengthening the rule of law in international relations, the international community declared the United Nations Decade of International Law and has taken a series of related measures. It is gratifying to note that on the initiative of Mongolia, the current session is to consider the question of drafting guiding principles for international negotiations. Mongolia believes that the adoption of a document defining guiding principles for international negotiations would not only meet the purposes and principles of the Decade but would also promote the definition of international criteria for conducting international negotiations on the basis of justice and the sovereign equality of States, irrespective of their actual power.

Mongolia continues to support the convening in 1998 of a diplomatic conference on the establishment of the international criminal court. We believe that the jurisdiction of the court should cover, *inter alia*, crimes of aggression and grave environmental crimes.

The Government of Mongolia is consistently pursuing a policy of democratization, embracing a market economy and opening up to the world. In the last year the new Government has undertaken a series of very important measures to accelerate political and economic reforms, stabilize the country's economy and ensure economic growth. To cite an example, we have introduced a zero per cent import tariff and accelerated the pace of privatization. These are important steps to attract foreign direct investment and expand trade with our major partners and the world at large.

Full membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO) early this year greatly contributed to the forward-looking development of Mongolia. We seek to cooperate constructively with WTO as the main multilateral trade-rule-setting mechanism.

As part of our policy of actively joining global and regional economic integration, Mongolia is striving to pursue a policy aimed at strengthening peace and security and developing cooperation in Asia and the Pacific. We are focusing our attention on North-East Asia in particular and are committed to increasing our cooperation with the countries of the region, both on a bilateral and a multilateral basis.

I should like to express our hope that Mongolia's interaction with the United Nations, its agencies and other international organizations and our bilateral cooperation with Member States will continue to play a valuable part in overcoming underdevelopment, in dealing with the hardships inherent in our transitional period and in meeting pressing socio-economic challenges. In this connection, I wish to express the gratitude of my Government to the donor countries, the United Nations and other international institutions for the support and assistance they have given my country.

Mongolia has always viewed the United Nations as an important instrument for safeguarding international peace and security and for promoting social and economic development, and has always supported it. We remain committed to strengthening the United Nations and enhancing its efficiency and effectiveness collectively with all Member States.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the Gambia, His Excellency Mr. Omar Yusupha Njie.

Mr. Njie (Gambia): Allow me first of all to extend my delegation's whole-hearted congratulations on the unanimous election of Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko to the high office of President of this session. His skills as a statesman are excellent qualifications for the presidency, and I wish to assure him of my delegation's support and cooperation at all times during the proceedings of this session.

My delegation's appreciation also goes to the President of the fifty-first session, His Excellency Ambassador Razali Ismail, for the impressive work he accomplished during his presidency. His efforts to improve the work of the General Assembly and strengthen the role of the United Nations in international affairs have increased the momentum of the United

Nations reform process. My delegation congratulates him on a job well done.

On behalf of my delegation, I also wish to extend our congratulations to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan. Since he assumed office in January this year, he has been engaged in commendable efforts to reform the United Nations Organization. The presentation of his two-tracked proposals and measures constitutes a bold and far-reaching reform programme, which is expected not only to revitalize the United Nations system but also to make it better suited to execute its mandates in the years ahead in a more efficient and cost-effective manner.

The fifty-second session of the General Assembly is taking place at an important period during the international community's effort to evolve an atmosphere of viable and equitable international cooperation in the areas of economic development, social advancement and the recognition of the important need for the maintenance of a balanced global ecosystem.

The recent holding of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, on the overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21, is one of the many factors and activities that symbolize the importance of this period and that mark our collective effort to shape a more meaningful atmosphere of international cooperation. The special session reaffirmed the international community's effort to ensure that the blueprint for international development and the preservation of the environment, as enunciated in Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration five years ago, are translated into concrete realities.

The successes and constraints so far recorded in our effort to achieve sustainable development clearly point to the difficulty of creating a framework for international cooperation characterized by the full and continued commitment of both developed and developing countries. As stated by Her Excellency the Vice-President of the Gambia during the special session,

> "The difficult and protracted negotiations and the intellectual, expert and statesmanlike efforts that made these agreements possible reflected the goodwill and good faith of all Governments ...
>
> "... the constraints cited as obstacles to implementation during this review session tend to indicate the persistence of the contentious and also cross-cutting issues of additional financial resources, technology transfer, information sharing, training and institutional capacity-building and the unfulfillment of our differentiated responsibilities under these provisions". [See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Nineteenth Special Session, Plenary Meetings*, 9th meeting]

I wish to inform the General Assembly of the political evolution taking shape in my country, the Gambia. Since the Gambian delegation addressed the Assembly last year, we have successfully completed a two-year transition programme to democratic civilian rule with the entry into force of a new Constitution for the Second Republic in January this year. Successful free and fair presidential and National Assembly elections were held earlier, in September 1996 and early January 1997. Most of the institutions provided for under the new Constitution are already in place and have started to play their legitimate role in the promotion and entrenchment of a genuine democratic culture that is commensurate with the hopes and aspirations of all Gambians. Throughout the transition process, the people of the Gambia have been regularly consulted; their views and aspirations have guided the process. In this exercise we have been faithful to our wishes. The Gambian National Assembly, which is playing its important role in our nation-building, has been readmitted to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, where we will continue to participate actively.

Alive to the fact that genuine democracy can neither thrive nor be nurtured and sustained in the midst of poverty, deprivation, hunger, ignorance and ill-health, the Gambia Government embarked on an ambitious socio-economic development programme during the two-year transition period, which focused basically on building schools, health facilities, roads and other infrastructure as well as on boosting agricultural development in order to ensure food self-sufficiency by the year 1999. The main objective of this programme was to lay the basis for a genuine and sustainable democracy that is in consonance with our own social and other specificities as a nation.

The successful completion of the transition period intensified our Government's determination to continue the effective implementation of measures and programmes designed to promote and achieve the sustained socio-economic development of the Gambia. In order to accomplish this task, the Government of the Gambia, in collaboration with the private sector, has embarked on the implementation of a national development programme to transform the country

economically and socially over a 25-year period into a developed, economically viable State. The blueprint for this socio-economic development is called Vision 2020. The overall orientation of this development blueprint, as enunciated in its mission statement, is:

> "To transform the Gambia into a financial centre, a tourist paradise, a trading export-oriented agricultural and manufacturing nation, thriving on free market policies and a vibrant private sector, sustained by a well-educated, trained, skilled, healthy, self-reliant and enterprising population, and guaranteeing a well-balanced ecosystem and a decent standard of living for one and all, under a system of government based on the consent of the citizenry".

It is obvious from that mission statement that we in the Gambia have opted for a holistic development strategy that is human-centred and export-oriented, and founded on free market principles. As rightly pointed out by His Excellency President Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh in his foreword to Vision 2020,

> "This means that the production base of the economy will be strengthened and diversified to cater for the needs of an export-oriented industry. In pursuit of pragmatism, Vision 2020 will build on the sound macroeconomic policies of our recent past while launching a new partnership contract between the public and private sectors to spin faster growth with equity."

In this connection, the Gambia has embarked on a sustained effort to enhance bilateral and multilateral cooperation with all friendly countries and institutions in order to ensure the realization of our development goals as enshrined in Vision 2020. In pursuit of these goals, we will not relent in our efforts to develop and enhance intra-African cooperation and solidarity in all vital sectors for the attainment of sustained economic growth. It is in fact the Gambia's firm belief and conviction that it is only through such cooperation, founded on self-reliance and hard work, that African countries can adequately rise to the daunting development challenges facing them.

To complement our own efforts at the national, subregional and regional levels, no effort will be spared to develop and enhance cooperation with all traditional development partners as well as new friends in conformity with the underlying principles of the Gambia's foreign policy objectives, which are predicated on openness, peaceful coexistence, genuine respect for each other's point of view and full equality in international intercourse with all countries. We strongly believe that it is only through dialogue and the constant quest to understand the points of view of others that we can aspire to attain world peace, mutual trust and understanding.

Here, I would like to underline again that the centrepiece of the Gambia's foreign policy is the promotion of African solidarity and self-reliance and the enhancement of world peace. That is why we are friends of all countries of the world irrespective of ideological or political differences. This policy is predicated on our strong belief that the world is one family, and that it pays no dividends to isolate any member of that great family, because any member of the family which feels isolated quickly becomes intransigent and hostile in its dealings with the rest of us. It is therefore paramount for us to maintain lines of dialogue between ourselves, which can only promote understanding.

On global economic issues, we note that the world economic outlook continues to be influenced strongly by the forces of economic globalization and trade liberalization, which in themselves are not negative trends, provided they are underpinned by a genuine desire on the part of all concerned to promote partnership, in an environment where equality reigns supreme.

The persistent slow rate of development in Africa can be traced to certain factors and impediments. Africa's foreign debt crisis remains a major impediment to growth. The international community's effort to resolve Africa's external debt problem continues to fall short of the desired result. The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, recently adopted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, while complementing the global effort, also fell short of the expected target of complete cancellation of the debt stock of developing countries. Unless this is done, the debt burden will naturally continue to have a negative impact on the availability of existing resources to finance Africa's economic recovery and social development.

Also, the growth and expansion of the incidence of poverty in Africa has contributed to the failure to achieve sustainable development on the continent. The sombre conclusions on the increase of poverty reflect, in a wider sense, the seeming lack of the required commitment by the international community to promote social progress and the qualitative improvement of the human condition,

as recommended by the World Summit for Social Development.

Here I want to state that my country, the Gambia, has embarked on a bold national plan of action for the eradication of poverty, and I want to commend the United Nations system, the World Bank and other bilateral partners that are actively assisting us to achieve our goals in this domain. We thank them for their continued support. Poverty, we all agree, is a global problem that needs to be addressed by all of us.

The pursuit of global peace and security remains a fundamental responsibility of our Organization. It is, however, regrettable that the international community's effort to achieve international peace and security has been constrained by continued conflicts and other forms of tension between States and communities.

In our own subregion of West Africa, the situation evolving in Sierra Leone remains of grave concern, not only to us but also to the international community. Failure to resolve the problem and restore stability, security and constitutionality in Sierra Leone can only prolong the ordeal of the innocent and peace-loving people of that country. Therefore, we all hope that the initiatives embarked upon by the Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS) within the framework of the Committee of Five will yield the anticipated results. I am pleased to note that the approach adopted by the Committee of Five to find a solution to the Sierra Leone crisis has the support of the United Nations Security Council and the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

It is hoped that the restoration of constitutional democracy in Liberia following the national elections held on 19 July 1997 will lead to a permanent peaceful solution to the country's crisis, paving the way for sustained national reconstruction. All of us in the subregion are giving our material and moral support to the sister Republic of Liberia to help it stay on the path of national reconciliation in order to recover fully from its tragedies of the recent past.

With regard to the Middle East, despite the significant progress of the past few years in the Middle East peace process, especially since the signing of the Oslo accords, we note with concern the erosion of the peace dividend accumulated in the international community's effort to achieve durable peace there. The recent escalation of tension between Israel and Palestine over the extension of Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem constitutes a serious threat to peace and security in the region.

The adoption by the General Assembly of resolution ES-10/3 of 15 July 1997, as well as other peace initiatives by the international community should, however, provide the basis for a peaceful and permanent solution to the conflict.

On a more general note, we in the Gambia strongly believe that the containment of tension and conflict globally can be enhanced by transparency, the restoration of mutual trust and confidence and respect for the rights of peoples, communities and nations in the execution of the role and mandates of the United Nations. As I indicated earlier, it is only through genuine dialogue and the desire and will to understand each other that we can achieve global peace.

In this regard, my delegation strongly supports the aspiration of the 21.3 million people of the Republic of China on Taiwan to exercise their right to share and participate in the activities of intergovernmental organizations on international cooperation by joining this comity of nations. The legitimacy of their aspirations, both legal and national, has been reinforced by similar actions and measures taken by the United Nations on the issue of parallel representation, which now serve as useful reminders and examples. The Taiwan question is also a test of the international community's interpretation of democracy. As we are all aware, the Republic of China on Taiwan has existed, physically, legally and politically, since the foundation of the United Nations. My Government therefore believes that our Organization will do itself a great service by admitting Taiwan into our midst, in the true spirit of the application of democratic principles. The presence of the Republic of China on Taiwan among us can only enrich our Organization. In this regard, we therefore believe that resolution 2758 (XXVI) adopted at the twenty-sixth session of the General Assembly, needs to be reviewed.

Concerning the legal dispute surrounding the bombing of Pan Am flight 103, the Gambia supports the resolution on the matter adopted by the OAU Heads of State or Government in Harare last May as providing a viable framework for resolving the present impasse.

With regard to Cuba, it is incomprehensible to us Gambians why a whole people, a whole nation, should be made to suffer the denial of the basic necessities of life simply because it chooses to live under a different

political ideology. Therefore, in the present climate of greater international cooperation and reconciliation, the people of Cuba and their Government deserve the support and assistance of the international community in their continued efforts to engage in more meaningful national development in order to achieve greater socio-economic progress. We fully support the measures being taken by this body to provide this support. In doing so, our Organization will only be upholding the principle of respecting the basic human rights of the Cuban people.

It is in this same spirit that we call on the international community to continue to preserve the dignity and security of the people and the Government of Kuwait and to support the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions on payment of reparations and compensation, release of prisoners of war and other conditions imposed on Iraq for its internationally condemned act of aggression against Kuwait. Therefore, while we encourage greater United Nations intervention in bringing solace to the suffering, innocent Iraqi civilian population, we strongly urge the Government of Iraq to comply with the provisions of these Security Council resolutions, in order to alleviate the suffering, especially that of the children.

That catalogue of conflicts and misunderstandings has prompted my Government and people to formulate the following wish, which we want to express to the international community: we want the United Nations and the international community to make a solemn pledge to ensure that all conflicts are peacefully resolved by the year 2000. In order to achieve this noble aim, we propose, first, that 1998 be declared a year for the resolution of all conflicts between Member States; and, secondly, that 1999, as it is on the eve of the twenty-first century, be a year devoid of conflicts and misunderstanding, to become the year of reconciliation.

This, we believe, will enable humankind to enter the twenty-first century as a united, peaceful family that can proudly bequeath to ensuing generations a developed, peaceful world, where democracy, justice, freedom and equality are guaranteed to everyone, irrespective of origin, race, religion or political ideology. That is what the Gambia wants to bequeath to coming generations, and we strongly believe that all it takes is tolerance, mutual respect, love, patience and understanding.

With regard to global trade relations, we followed with high expectation the conclusion of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations and its implementation. While encouraging globalization and liberalization, it deprived developing countries, particularly those in Africa, of the opportunities and benefits predicted during its implementation.

We note, however, that the liberalization of trade and investment policies has yet to foster international cooperation for the achievement of economic development and genuine partnership among all nations. Developing countries in general, and African and the least developed countries in particular, are yet to be effectively integrated into the world economy. The commitments agreed in the Final Act of the Uruguay Round have not been fully implemented.

International cooperation has, however, continued to flourish in other equally important areas. The promotion and expansion of South-South cooperation continues to receive greater support among developing countries. These cooperation initiatives have resulted in the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, among many other initiatives. Within the context of promoting South-South cooperation, Japan has successfully held the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD I) and it is now planning to host a follow-up conference, TICAD II, next year, in an effort to develop a practical, achievable and sustainable development programme for Africa.

It is indeed commendable that this Japanese initiative is not restricted to Africa, but also includes the evolution of a new development strategy responsive to the present international development climate, and is providing the motivating force for a concerted global effort. We commend Japan for these initiatives, including financial contributions which serve as a practical demonstration of South-South cooperative interaction and application.

It should, however, be pointed out that the promotion and application of South-South cooperation within the context of technical and economic cooperation among developing countries can only succeed as an important aspect of international development cooperation if both the South and North remain committed to its full realization.

Intra-African economic cooperation and integration have also been growing. Regional activities are now directed to the socio-economic transformation and integration of the economies of African States. The adoption and implementation of the Abuja Treaty, putting

in place economic integration arrangements, is a positive effort in building an African Economic Community. The inaugural session of the African Economic Community was held during the thirty-third summit of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in June this year. We in Africa are becoming more and more aware of the paramount importance of self-reliance. Any assistance from development partners must be seen as a complement to what we can or should do by ourselves.

Within the context of subregional cooperation, the Gambia hosted the twelfth summit of Heads of State and Government of the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), held in Banjul from 11 to 12 September 1997. The summit unanimously elected His Excellency Colonel Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh, President of the Republic of the Gambia, as chairman of the organization for the next three years. These meetings and activities testify to the importance attached to the issues of drought and desertification, not only in Africa, but also in other parts of the world, and to the urgent need for a sustained collaborative effort to combat the twin menace. In this regard, the Gambia is fully and actively participating in the ongoing Rome Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa. In fact, we should redouble the resources provided and the measures so far adopted to combat drought and desertification and improve our environment in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, and also of chapter 12 of Agenda 21, adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. In furtherance of these targets we intend to achieve, as President Yahya Jammeh stated, sustainable development and food security through research into the underlying phenomena of drought, desertification and ecological instability and by designing and implementing programmes for natural resource management and the improvement of agro-food sectors in the Sahel, as well as the sustainability of farming systems.

I will conclude with the subject of reform of the United Nations system, a subject very dear to the hearts of Gambians. The reform of the United Nations system continues to engage our collective attention. Reform activities — including the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, especially the work of the Economic and Social Council; and the efforts of the High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System in formulating innovative mechanisms to enhance the role and functions of the General Assembly and its main Committees, as well as of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council — continue to attract wide debate, both at the United Nations and in other forums. These include OAU, which at the summit of Heads of State and Government held in Harare in June adopted a Declaration on the reform of the Security Council to which the Gambia remains firmly committed.

It is my Government's firm belief and conviction that there is an urgent need to democratize the United Nations, and especially the Security Council, to make it more responsive to the hopes and aspirations of all its Members for a world devoid of intolerance, injustice and inequality. There is therefore a need to curb the use of the veto, which is exercised by some Powers in the Security Council against the wishes of the vast majority of the Members of our Organization. The geopolitical and historical considerations that were at the heart of the present composition and mandate of the Security Council no longer prevail. The composition of the Security Council should therefore be reflective of the realities of our times, and the powers of the individual Member States therein seen in the same light.

We also firmly believe that it is necessary to ensure that United Nations resolutions and, indeed, decisions by the International Court of Justice are respected, obeyed and implemented by all countries. It is not fair that while some countries are chastised for violating United Nations resolutions, others seem to violate them with impunity.

With regard to the Secretary-General's Track 2 reform proposals, the report (A/51/950) entitled "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform" includes bold and far-reaching measures and proposals. The Gambia generally supports the Secretary-General's reform proposals, in particular the following.

First, we have that of creating a dividend for development. The effectiveness of this initiative would depend on Member States meeting their financial contributions to the Organization on time. Moreover, the initiative should serve as a catalyst for donors to provide greater support for development by meeting the agreed target contribution of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product.

Secondly, the creation of the post of Deputy Secretary-General is timely, given the increasing

mandates of the Organization. However, it is expected that the role of the Deputy Secretary-General would go beyond mobilization of funds for the Organization to incorporate administrative coordination. The length of stay in office of the incumbent should be determined.

Thirdly, restructuring and regrouping of organs and agencies to facilitate their effectiveness and productivity should be guided by agreed principles, procedures and operational objectives to prevent a reduction of their usefulness while enhancing the achievements of their specific goals.

Fourthly, the fiscal measures, including zero growth and personnel cuts, are necessary. It is expected that this will not impair the Organization's capability to fully discharge all its responsibilities.

Fifthly, the putting into effect of "UN House" — the common premises system for all United Nations agencies serving in one country — is necessary and timely, given the substantial savings to be derived from the sharing of common services. Additionally, maintaining a common identity and location in a country would enhance the United Nations presence as a world Organization, as well as its accessibility in terms of speed and effective communication. It will also minimize confusion, waste and duplication of efforts.

Suffice it to say that the Gambia will continue to study the Secretary-General's reform proposals and their broad implications for the Organization and Member States in the years ahead.

Lastly, as we continue with the reform of the United Nations system after over 50 years of operations, so must we also continue to address the weaknesses, inequalities and inadequacies inherent in the international economic and social system, global trade, finance and investment, international development and so on in order to achieve more meaningful international cooperation and global partnership, the promotion and preservation of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the right to development, good governance and economic growth — all cherished hallmarks of sustainable development and human achievements.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.